

Food for thought

New labels to give shoppers more facts about nutrition

Houston

Road win

Houston takes a second game in Pittsburgh 7-4

Sports

Kids and alcohol

Too often, parents are the ones who introduce their children to drinking

Yo! Houston

Houston Chronicle

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★★★

Mideast pact signed at long last

By PEYMAN PEJMAN
Special to the Chronicle

Last-minute complication resolved

CAIRO, Egypt — Israeli and PLO leaders signed a historic agreement Wednesday giving Palestinians limited self-government in the Gaza Strip and the biblical town of Jericho on the West Bank — but not without a last-minute glitch.

The accord means that a Palestinian administration, to be named later, will take over Gaza and an

■ **Peace now depends less on leaders and more on everyday people: Page 22A.**

area around Jericho. Up to 9,000 armed Palestinian police will maintain security for the estimated 700,000 people inside the areas, but external security will be the responsibility of Israel.

The accord also requires Israel to withdraw its troops from the areas, 27 years after the Jewish state occupied the lands during the Six-Day War of 1967. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel said at a news conference that the Palestine Liberation Organization asked Israel for a delay in withdrawing its troops because the PLO is still not prepared to take

over policing the areas.

Several key issues were unresolved, and the intensity of the negotiations spilled over to the signing ceremony when PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat refused to sign a set of maps appended to the agreement and staged a brief walkout.

Observers said he was upset because the size of the Palestinian area

around Jericho and the configuration of Gaza are still being negotiated. He feared signing the maps would signal he has agreed to the boundaries shown on the maps, they said.

Arafat listened as Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres tried to cool him down.

After 15 minutes, Arafat walked

See MIDEAST on Page 16A.



Knight-Ridder Tribune

'We need more heroes to kill the bad guys.'

Boy makes comic heroes smoke-free

Marvel card figures will stop lighting up

By GLEN GOLIGHTLY
Houston Chronicle

Comic book hero Nick Fury fought World War II Nazis and Cold War secret agents with a lit stogie clenched in his teeth, but now — at the behest of a 7-year-old Houston card collector — the gruff but lovable Fury is stubbing out his cigar.

Superheroes Fury and Blaze, along with archvillains Red Skull and Kingpin, will no longer be shown using tobacco products in future series of Marvel Masterpiece trading cards.

"Heroes shouldn't smoke," Sammy Blum said. "But villains can die because it's OK for the heroes to kill them."

After Sammy, a collector of comic books and trading cards, wrote a letter to the New England Journal of Medicine complaining about the smoking habits of the comic characters, Marvel Entertainment Group agreed to stop depicting its superheroes as smokers, at least on the cards.

Helping Sammy write the letter was his father, Dr. Alan Blum, a longtime anti-smoking activist and founder of Doctors Ought to Care.

"I wanted them (Marvel) to stop showing them smoking because we need more heroes to kill the bad guys," said Sammy, whose letter appears in the journal issue being released today.

"I collect Marvel Masterpieces," Sammy wrote. "So do some of my friends and my brothers. I found 5 out of 100 cards that were

See COMICS on Page 16A.



D. Fahleson / Chronicle

Sammy Blum, 7, shows a trading card of comic book hero Nick Fury, who violently slays enemies. Sammy's complaints about

the gun-brandishing Fury smoking a cigar prompted Marvel comics to stop printing cards showing characters using tobacco.

Assault gun foes pick up support from two Texans

By NANCY MATHIS
Houston Chronicle Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Advocates of an assault weapons ban claimed momentum was in their favor Wednesday as they picked up more support, including from Houston's Mike Andrews and El Paso's Ron Coleman, on the eve of the key House vote.

The House will vote today on a measure banning the manufacture and sale of 19 military-style semi-automatic assault weapons. Only current lawful owners of those weapons could keep them.

Pressure from the White House continued to mount as President Clinton called wavering members. Three former presidents, Ronald

■ **City Council gives support to assault weapon ban: Page 29A.**

■ **Rep. Mike Andrews explains why he'll vote for ban: Page 33A.**

Reagan, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, also signed letters to House members urging their support for the bill.

The National Rifle Association, the chief opponent, continued a grassroots effort, swamping members of offices with calls from constituents opposed to the ban. The Law Enforcement Alliance of America sent its police officers door to door in House offices.

Although polls show 70 percent or

See GUNS on Page 16A.

School day and year need to be longer, report urges

By MARY JORDAN
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The typical U.S. student spends only three hours a week learning core academic subjects, half as much time as his counterpart in Germany and Japan, according to a congressionally mandated commission that today will recommend lengthening the American school day and year.

This report aims to scrap the current school schedule in favor of a more rigorous one. The standard American school is now organized according to 50-minute class periods, 6-hour days and 180-day school

years.

That limited schedule makes it difficult for American students to compete internationally, and should be "relegated to museums," the National Education Commission on Time and Learning said.

"What we are talking about here is nothing less than fundamentally changing the structure and rhythm of American life," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley.

He said that how the country structures the "school day in the future" has enormous implications for the lives of working mothers and fathers. "We are putting parents in a

See SCHOOLS on Page 16A.

Clinton angers oil executives

Oil executives meeting in Houston scolded the Clinton administration for failing to get together with them to discuss their industry's problems.

President Clinton's apparent avoidance of the executives' request for a meeting is "worse than being turned down by a pretty girl ... when you ask her to dance. At least she says no," one oil official said: **Business.**

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Weather

Houston and vicinity: Partly cloudy. High 84. Low 63. More data on Page 35A.

Weather: H-O-U-S-T-O-N, Access S-K-Y

Austin's voters to decide what makes a family

By ROY BRAGG
Houston Chronicle

AUSTIN — The once-unthinkable may happen here Saturday: Conservatives have a chance of winning an election in Texas' most liberal city, when they ask voters to abolish a policy that provides insurance to the live-in lovers of municipal workers.

On paper, it's a fight over whether the city should spend \$100,000 a year to provide medical insurance for the unmarried companions of 100 city employees who have applied for it.

Supporters say marriage shouldn't determine domestic partners' eligibility to be covered as dependents of city workers, while detractors say public funds can be put to better use.

But the real issues run deeper.

Although the policy would cover both homosexual and heterosexual partners, gay activists equate the fight to retain the policy with the battle against homophobia and — more important to them — their battle against the religious right.

"That's the crux of this election," said Mac McKaskel of the gay-rights group Act Up. "No matter what your views are on domestic

See AUSTIN on Page 16A.



Steve Ueckert / Chronicle

Cinco-nized dancing

Sherman Elementary School students entertain Wednesday during Cinco de Mayo festivities at Turner Elementary. Today's

holiday commemorates the Battle of Puebla, on May 5, 1862, in which Mexican troops defeated the French: **Page 33A.**

Veteran county leader Lyons dies at age 84

By RAD SALLEE
Houston Chronicle

E.A. "Squatty" Lyons, described by colleagues as the quintessential old-time road and bridge commissioner during 48 years on Harris County Commissioners Court, died Wednesday at age 84.

The public may pay respects after 1 p.m. today at Heights Funeral Home, 1317 Heights Blvd., with family visitation from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Services are scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday at West End Baptist Church, 802 Shepherd Drive, with burial in Woodlawn Garden of Memories, 1101 Antoine.

Lyons' stubby physique packed immense energy, making him a football legend at Reagan High School in the Heights and helping him defeat 20 opponents in 12 elections for the Precinct 4 seat from 1942 until he retired in 1990.

A family member said death came at 2:20

See LYONS on Page 20A.